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UNCLAS DUSHANBE 002006

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SUBJECT: VIRGINIA NATIONAL GUARD HAZMAT RESPONSE ASSESSMENT TEAM  
COMPLETES ASSESSMENT OF TAJIKISTAN

**1. SUMMARY:** Four members of the Virginia National Guard (VNG) assessed the capability of Tajik ministries to respond to a hazardous materials incident. The team visited the Ministries of Emergency Situations, Defense, State Border Protection Committee, Academy of Sciences, and local fire department. The team was surprised to find that, although the Tajiks are in need of upgraded equipment and techniques, they do have a capability and qualified personnel to respond. It was noted that the Ministry of Defense was best set up to respond to hazmat incidents and this is where the VNG intends to concentrate its efforts.

**2. Ministry of Defense:** The Special Chemical, Biological, Radiological (CBR) Company is an MOD unit that reports directly to the MOD Chief of Staff. It is commanded by a Colonel and consists of four platoons, each with 25-28 soldiers. Although the soldiers in this special unit are conscripts with little specialized training, several of the officers are graduates of special Soviet CBR Defense schools. The Colonel indicated that the Chemical Company's primary mission is to work with the CBR department at MES to build a CBR response capability for Tajikistan (note: MES never articulated that they had such a unit or displayed this capability). The MOD CBR Company equipment for Hazmat/WMD response was antiquated (1970s era) soviet chemical and radiation equipment. Most of this detection equipment appeared in good condition, some may even still be operable. Their personal protective gear is antiquated soviet equipment that is only suited for training. Overall assessment is that MOD has an established Hazmat/ WMD response team with a core of trained personnel that, if properly equipped and trained, will be capable of performing the Hazmat/ WMD response mission. They have antiquated detection equipment, but are familiar with newer technologies. They have an operable fleet of vehicles dedicated to their response mission. They have inadequate personal protective equipment, but know the principles of personal protection and are familiar with newer equipment.

**3. Ministry of Interior:** The Central Fire Service is an MOI unit that handles the initial response to any type of emergency or natural disaster in Tajikistan. Although their primary function is fire prevention, they regularly respond to other types of emergencies. They indicated that they recently handled a chlorine leak in Dushanbe. A central dispatch controls their response from numerous branch stations across the country. They have received training in emergency response from US firefighters, and were very knowledgeable within their area of expertise. They have respiratory protection (SCBA and Rebreather) that is adequate and functional. They have protective equipment for fires, but none for hazardous materials. They have no detection equipment for HazMat concerns like flammable atmospheres, oxygen levels, carbon monoxide or chlorine. Overall assessment is that MOI has an established emergency response capability with a core of trained personnel that, if properly equipped and trained, could be capable of performing the Hazmat/ WMD response mission. (COMMENT: It is interesting to note that the local fire service falls under the Ministry of Interior. END COMMENT)

**4. Ministry of Emergency Situations:** MES is responsible for building a unified response capability for emergencies. They control Civil Defense Troops that support emergency management. MES is developing a training center for Emergency Situations, but this center, although well furnished by the UN, lacks computers, reference books and training aids. The MES equipment for Hazmat/WMD response was antiquated (1970s era) soviet chemical and radiation equipment. Most of this detection equipment appeared inoperable. Their personal protective gear is antiquated soviet equipment that is not suited for Hazmat response. MES asserted that they have other equipment at other locations, and have personnel who are trained in chemical,

biological and radiological response. We were unable to meet with these people or see this equipment. Overall assessment is that MES has no established Hazmat/ WMD response team, little or no functional detection equipment, and inadequate personal protective equipment. It will take significantly longer to

train MES if there is not a core of trained personnel upon which to build a team (again, they asserted but did not display this capability).

15. Border Guards: Border Guards are responsible for policing the border of Tajikistan. Border Guards asserted no capability for Hazmat/ WMD Response. They displayed a functional protective mask, but indicated that they have a limited supply. Overall assessment is that the Border Guards have no established Hazmat/ WMD response team, no detection equipment, and inadequate personal protective equipment.

16. Academy of Sciences -Nuclear Radiation Safety Agency: This agency is responsible for state policy on nuclear and radiation protection, control and licensing of radiation sources, retrieval of orphan sources and mitigation of radiation contamination. They are well equipped, to western lab standards, for detection and identification of radiation. They have no chemical or biological expertise or equipment. Overall assessment is that this will be an excellent source of radiation expertise that can augment and enhance a Tajik Hazmat/WMD response team. They will be able to definitively identify radioactive isotopes and have the resources to advise on response and mitigation. Similar subject-matter experts for Chemical and Biological response must be identified to assist the Tajik Hazmat/ WMD response team.

17. A full copy of the report with the teams' recommendations has been forwarded to ISN/EC for consideration. POC for this message is Paul Shott, EXBS advisor, shottpj@state.gov, phone 992 372 241560 ext. 2102.  
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